

A place for young and old to meet

Restoration of Wright Building nears completion

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Joe Grady, Duxbury Conservation Administrator

DUXBURY — A makeshift, narrow door a quarter of a way deep from the original entrance sits ajar. Inside, the smell of hot solder lingers. "Wet paint" signs are taped up on the walls and doors, and sawdust, paint cans, ladders and empty Dunkin' Doughnuts cups are spread out along the floors - signs of hard work and long hours.

To a "light" green reporter, seeing the interior of the building for the first time, the renovated building is simply a beautiful construction with exceptional detail. To Duxburians, the historic building, being restored to its original form, has not only been stripped of paint, but is being stripped back to the beauty that once lay deep within its walls. Underneath a thick coat of white paint the original black cypress great fireplace encases pure marble. Discovered in the rich, detailed framing, is the space where the face of a clock will soon again inhabit, and within the carved wooden décor, lays the original natural gold leafing.

It has been almost four years in the making, but the Wright Building is closing in on completion. According to Department of Public Works Director Tom Daley, the building should be completed by the end of January, and, if town manager Richard MacDonald has any say over the matter, the project will be finished by Feb. 1.

The building will serve as a teen center for the Duxbury Student Union and as an archival library for the Duxbury Rural and Historical Society. "Fold the youth of Duxbury with the history of Duxbury and hope it may lead to some cross-activities and cross pollination," Conservation administrator Joe Grady said.

The original 1907 gift, donated by Georgiana Wright, in memory of her young son, is more than a restored building, it is rich with the history of Duxbury. Grady, who was instrumental in the project, and grew up in Duxbury, is proud to be part of a project that is returning a building he has seen go through so many changes, to its original state.

"I am proud of the fact that we are restoring what was a gift to the town by Georgiana Wright and making a very useful building for the community, bringing it up to 2007 standards, while the same time preserving the history of the building," he said. "A gift from a 100 years ago, in 1907, in memory of her young son, will serve the community for another hundred years."

Since Town Meeting in 2003, the Wright building has been the subject of at least one warrant article every year. In March 2003, the first Wright Building article appeared when the Community

Preservation Committee asked the town for \$50,000 to fund a historical survey of the building. The following year, the Student Union Association submitted several articles for town meeting regarding the Wright Building. The first was to try and gain use of half of the space to create a teen center. The second was in the amount of \$79,600, for operating costs and expenses. The third article, seeking \$124,195, was submitted to bring the building up to code with the Americans with Disabilities Act. The Community Preservation Committee also again submitted an article to use \$50,000 in Community Preservation Act money to hire a consultant to conduct a survey of the building.

In March 2005, Daley was brought in to oversee the construction and building of the project. As with the restoration of any old building they ran into some difficulties. From leaky roofs to asbestos, the project endured its share of bumps in the road, but also fell upon some beautiful hidden gems.

"It is going to be gratifying when it is done, because it was one of the most difficult projects," Daley said. "But when it is all said and done, it is going to be a beautiful facility."

Grady and Daley agreed that one of the nicer aspects of the project is the landscaped handicap ramp at the side entrance of the building. Grady said he was very pleased with the access ramp and entry to building, which uses landscaping rather than engineering to create access from the ground to the first floor of the building. "I think it makes the two halves of the building look a lot better, a much smoother transition," he added.

However, one of the less appealing additions to the building is the giant green transformer on the front lawn. Grady said in the end they just could not justify spending a lot of money to move the transformer. To him that is the heartache of the project, but nothing some nice landscaping won't cover.

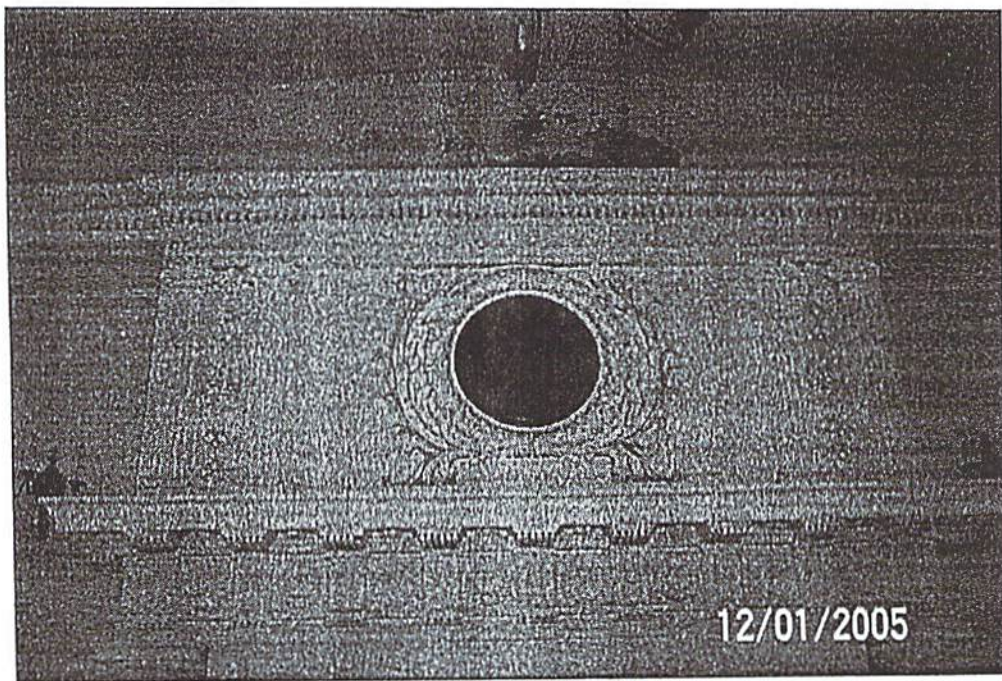
After putting a bid out for an architect to restore the historical building, Finegold Alexander and Associates Inc., was hired to restore the 1907 building to its original form. Grady said they had good historical documents outlining what the building looked like along with well-preserved photos that allowed them to come as close to the original as they possibly could in every aspect of the restoration. They went into great detail - from the molding, to the lighting fixtures and the painting. A paint specialist took samples of the original paint and replicated the color and then matched it throughout the building he said.

While preserving the history of the building, Daley and Grady also worked to make the building up to date and energy efficient. The building contains all modern services, required ventilation, heating and air condition, energy efficient windows and a humidity controlled room for the archives.

In May 2007, it will be 100 years since the original dedication of the Wright Building. It is the town's hope to rededicate the building then. During restoration, the crew was in search of a time capsule that was buried a hundred years earlier. Although, they were never able to locate it, they hope to emulate that concept with the dedication this year to be opened 100 years from now.

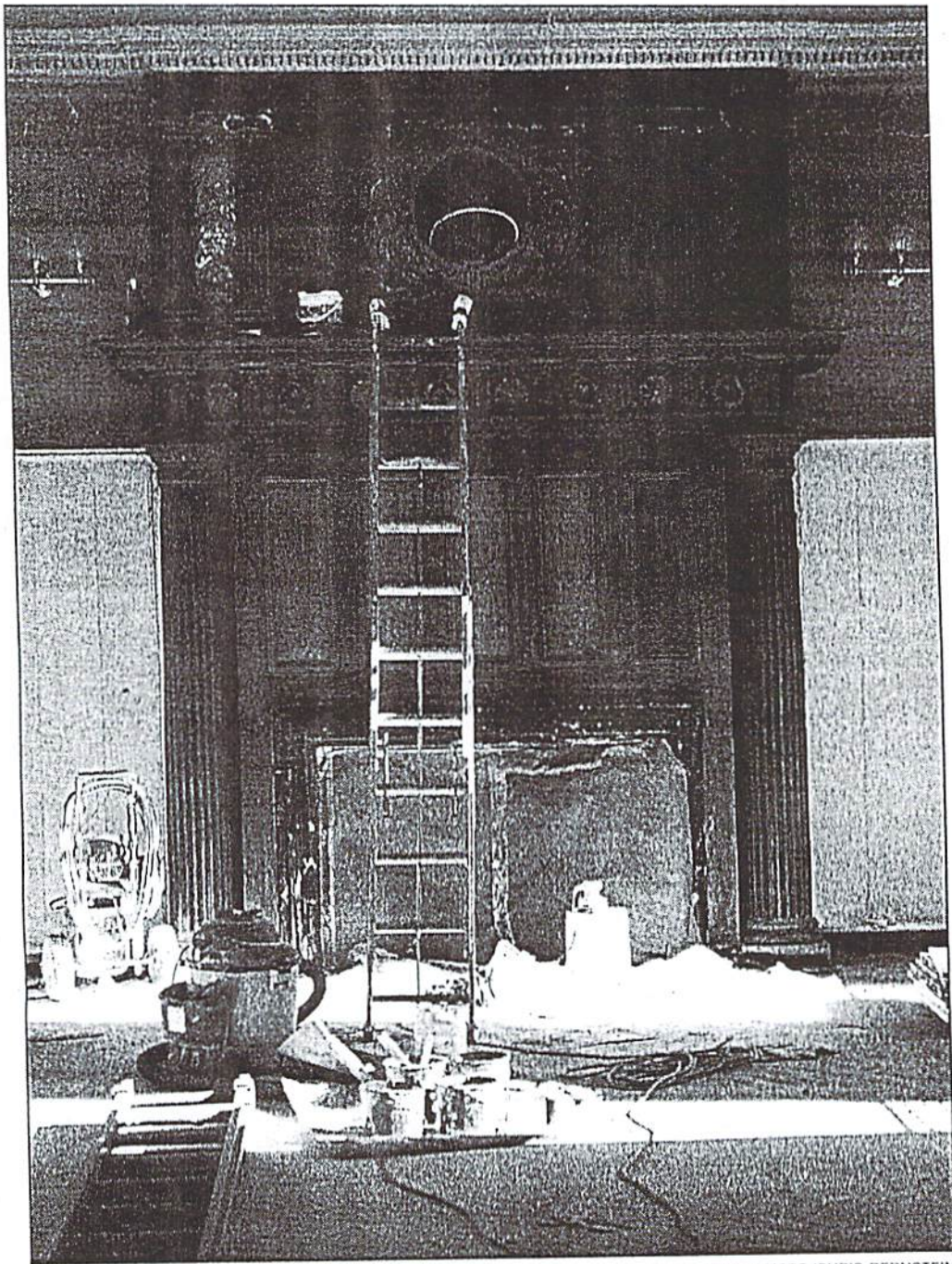
Grady who has worked on the project since its conception and seen it through to the end, is also tied to the history of the building, having grown up in the town. "I learned so much about the building and learned to appreciate the architecture on both halves of the building. I used the building before the new addition was added, played in the original 1907 structure, was in awe of old library as a child and utilized the children's room on back," he said. "To be involved in the restoration was kind of neat and fulfilling because the building had served me as youngster, in both halves."

BEFORE



STAFF PHOTO/ANDRIA FARRELL

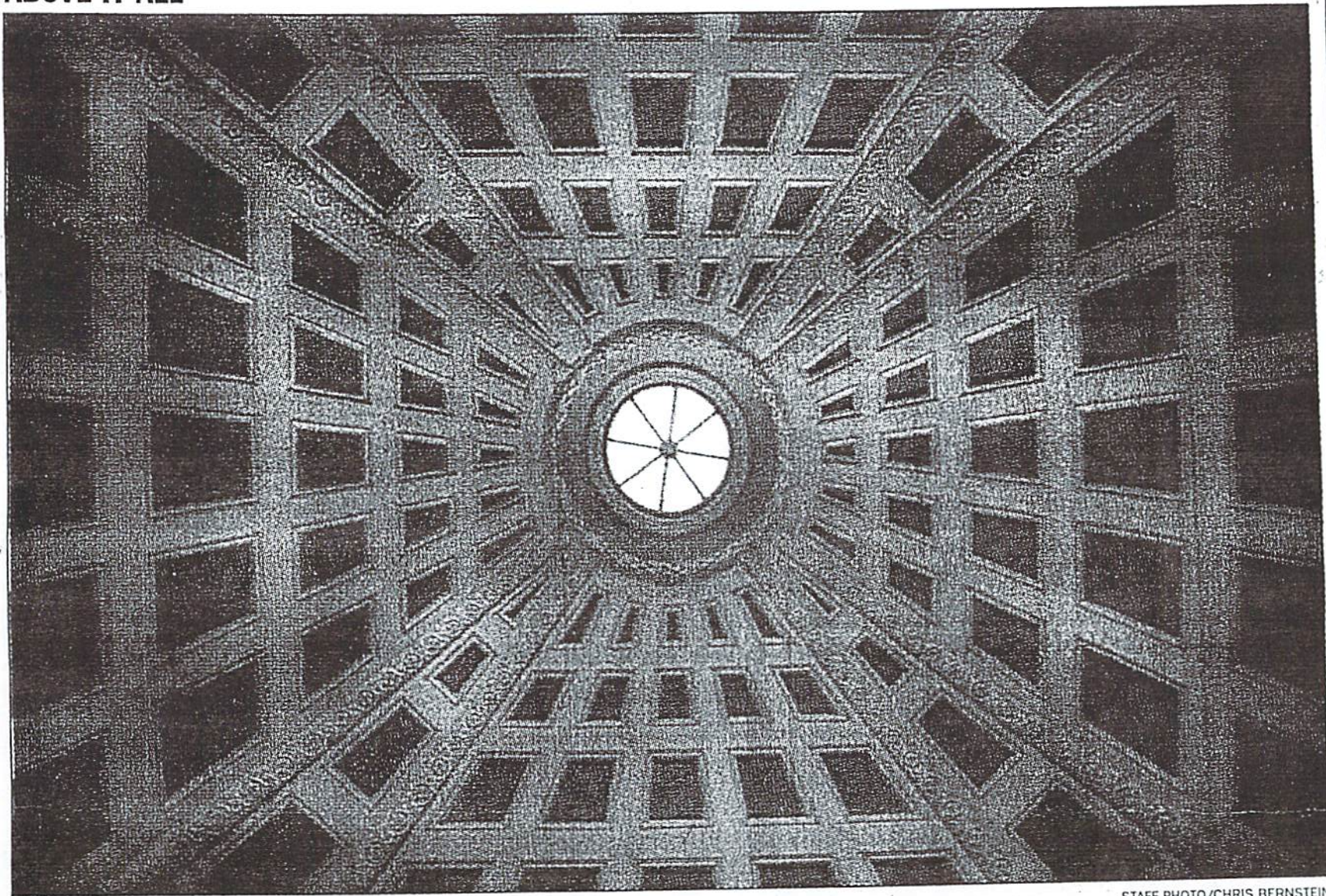
AFTER



STAFF PHOTO/CHRIS BERNSTEIN

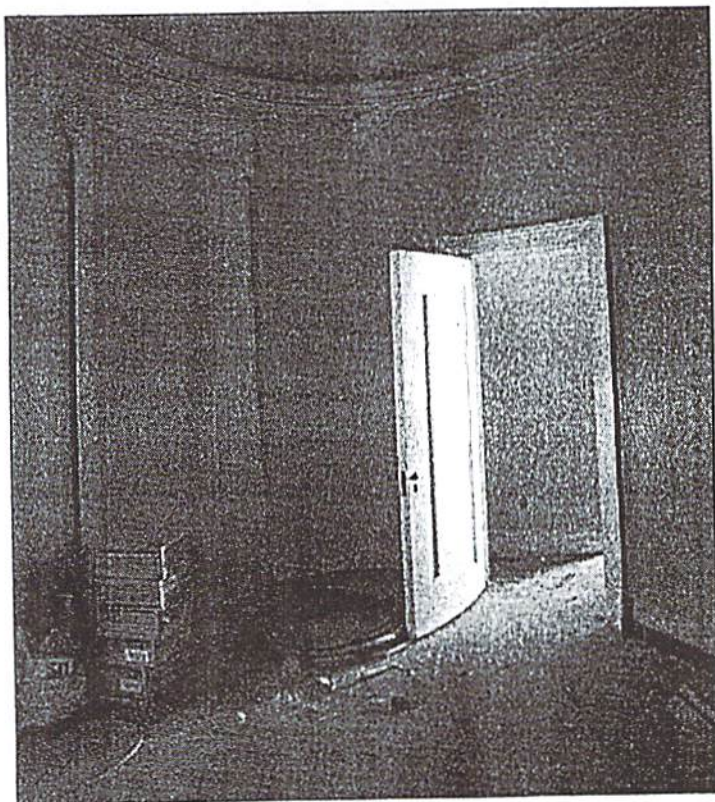
The black cypress wood of the great fireplace is revealed as restoration of the Wright Building nears completion. Note the space above where a clock will resume its rightful place.

ABOVE IT ALL



STAFF PHOTO/CHRIS BERNSTEIN

The restored dome of the Wright Building soars above the newly renovated building. Work is expected to be completed by the end of the month/ Story on Page 6.



STAFF PHOTO/CHRIS BERNSTEIN

Renovations are nearing completion at the Wright Building, which will soon house both a teen center and the archives of the Duxbury Rural and Historical Society.